

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 9th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The murky waters
Baptism of the Lord, First Sunday after Epiphany
Luke 3:15-17 & Luke 3:21-22

Welcome

Announcements

Confirmation and New Member Class

Starting end of Feb. Email me with dates and time which work best, and I will try to find a universal time that works for all.

Call to Worship

Beloved, God chooses us and calls us by name.

We belong to God. Alleluia!

Our lives have purpose because we belong to God.

We are called to be like Christ and follow him.

We will find joy, peace, and restoration through God's amazing grace.

Let us worship God who claims us and loves us! Praise be to God!

Prayer of Adoration

*Creator of the sun and moon and stars,
You stir in our midst to reveal your light.
By the work of your Spirit, you lead us in new directions.
Your beloved Son has called us to new life
and by his grace, reconciles the divisions among us.
Holy One, we praise you for the blessings you give us
in our baptism into Christ,
and through your love that surrounds us day by day.
To you we give all praise, glory and honor,*

*through Jesus Christ,
who is one with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and always. Amen.*

Opening Hymn #168: "Who Is He In Yonder Stall" (V 1, 5)

Who is He in yonder stall,
At whose feet the shepherds fall?
Who is He in deep distress,
Fasting in the wilderness?

'Tis the Lord! O wondrous story!
'Tis the Lord! the King of glory!
At His feet we humbly fall,
Crown Him! crown Him Lord of all!

Who is He that from the grave
Comes to heal and help and save?
Who is He that from His throne
Rules thro' all the world alone?

Call to Confession

*The light has come into the world,
and people loved darkness rather than light
because their deeds were evil.
Let us confess our sin to God.*

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life,
but we confess that we prefer our old, familiar ways.
We cling to destructive habits,
we harbor grudges,
and we are reluctant to welcome a stranger or forgive one another.
Nostalgia for the past prevents us from exploring new possibilities.
In your loving kindness, forgive us.
Have mercy upon us and move among us
so that we might pursue new life in Christ together.**

Assurance of Pardon

*Do not be afraid, for Christ has redeemed you.
Baptized in the deep waters of death, he has washed away your sins.
Risen from death, he invites you to be washed in the cleansing tide of God's mercy.
Your sins are forgiven; be at peace with God, with yourself, and with each other.*

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Responsive Reading

Isaiah 43:1-7

*But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.*

**² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.**

*³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.*

**⁴ Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.**

*⁵ Fear not, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you.*

**⁶ I will say to the north, Give up,
and to the south, Do not withhold;**

bring my sons from afar
 and my daughters from the end of the earth,
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
 whom I created for my glory,
 whom I formed and made.”

Music Ministry

Light of the World

Prayer for illumination

*Lord God of the nations,
 we have seen the star of your glory rising in splendor.
 The radiance of your incarnate Word
 pierces the night that covers the earth
 and signals the dawn of justice and peace.
 May his brightness illumine our lives
 and invite all nations to walk as one in your light
 even now as your Word is read and proclaimed.
 We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
 in the splendor of eternal light, God forever and ever. Amen.*

Scripture

Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22

¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Children’s Hymn # 164: “One Small Child” (V 1, 4)

One small child in a land of a thousand,
 One small dream of a Savior tonight,

One small hand reaching out to the starlight,
One small city of life.

One small child in a land of a thousand,
One small dream in a people of might,
One small hand reaching out to the starlight,
One small Savior of life.

Children's Lesson

Today we are learning about Jesus's baptism. Baptism is one of the sacraments that we still celebrate today. It is a symbolic thing we do to represent the baptism that Jesus had almost 2000 years ago. Baptism is a way for us to wash away our sins and a way for Jesus to send the Holy Spirit into us, to help us grow in him and serve like him in this world.

Baptism is actually a really important thing. Many people do not think about it as carefully as they used to in the past. Baptism means that we are committing ourselves to Christ, which is why you see many people who are baptized as babies being confirmed later. No baby can really decide whether or not they are going to follow Christ for their life.

When a baby is baptized, the parents and the church make a promise to God that they will raise the baby to worship, praise and study about God. When they do not do that, the people they go to church with, are supposed to remind them of the promise they made.

Baptism also means that we become part of God's family. He will look after us and gives us the gift of eternal life, all for free. We become one of God's children and get a whole bunch of new brothers and sisters who are also followers of God. People who will help us study and learn about God and support us in our troubles as well as cheer us on in our successes. We all belong to God together.

Wonderful father,

We are so thankful that through our baptism we were made part of your family. We are happy that we are all part of this loving community that teaches us all about your love and your word. Father, we pray that you would continue to be at work in each of us through the Holy Spirit, helping us to be faithful followers and to grow up in you. In Jesus name we pray,

Amen

Sermon

John the Baptist must have been a pretty impressive figure in the faith community at his time. It had been centuries since the Israelites had had a prophet and suddenly out of the wilderness come John. A man who seems like a prophet of old, dressed in camel hair clothing bound up with a wide leather belt. Eating foods that seem odd like grasshoppers and wild honey.

Not only is he dressed like the prophets of old. He was out there preaching of salvation, calling out the people for their wrongs. He was saying the biblically right things in a very socially wrong time. Calling on all who would listen to him to repent from their sinful nature because the Kingdom of Heaven was near. John was right there in the forefront of his culture calling out everyone, including the religious leaders to turn from their ways of sin and return to the teachings of God.

He stood there proclaiming the truth, not looking or acting like anyone else in that society because he was called to bring the message of God to them. That call made him tell them that the things that their society and culture said were ok, were actually against the will of God and that they needed to change. They needed to repent and condemn their own sinful lives. He called for them to be baptized, to be washed clean of their sins and to change their lives for their salvation. John was a man who preached the good news, God loves you and wants to save you, God is sending a saviour and you need to listen to him and follow him for your own salvation.

John was a man who new and understood the importance and meaning behind a baptism. Baptism was a commitment, a call to change in the lives of those baptized. They were to go forth from their baptism and repent their sins, try to sin no more! They were meant to stumble and struggle and fall and fail, but they were walking on the path to salvation. They were to be following the teachings of God and they were working at their own sanctification, trying to live a life without the sins of the flesh.

Then one day while John is preaching and Baptizing along the Jordan River Jesus appears before him and asks to be baptized. John cannot fathom why Jesus would need to be baptized. Jesus lives without sin; he has no need to repent and change from his sinful ways. John knew Jesus was sinless and his mind could not understand why Jesus would need to be baptized by a sinner. To John the only one who should be baptizing was Jesus, the man who lived his life under God's commands.

Yet here, Jesus stood before him and told John he needed to be baptized. The baptism of Jesus is what we are celebrating today, and it is through the study of it that we should get an understanding of both why it was that Jesus needed to be baptized and how it is related to the baptism or confirmation we make when we become true followers of Christ.

Let us begin with looking at why Jesus needed to be baptized. Why was it that Jesus insisted upon John baptizing him that day in the Jordan River? Our normal answer of he needed to be baptized because he was of sinful flesh does not work.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus even though he was fully man and suffered from all the temptations that we have, never chose the path of sin. He never went against the teachings of God. In fact, we read elsewhere in scripture that Jesus came to take away our sins. He was the perfect lamb of God without any blemish or spot. Read a little about the importance of a perfect sacrifice in the book of Leviticus and you will get an understanding of why it was so vital that Jesus is the perfect lamb of God.

So, if we step away from the idea that Jesus needed to be baptized because of his sin, what are we left with? Why did the perfect lamb of God need to be baptized?

Do you know the expression, 'Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater?' it originated because of the ways baths use to be taken. To heat enough water for a bath over a fire took a lot of time and effort, so in any family on bath day, Dad got in first, when he was done the next oldest male would bathe, after the men the women would do the same, and the very last ones into the water was the baby. By this time the water was no longer clean, it was dirty, very dirty, if the baby was in the water, you could not see them through the water, and this is where the saying comes from.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Just under 2000 years ago, Jesus a real living human being and the real Son of God stepped into the river Jordan and received the same baptism from the same man who was calling everyone out to wash away their sin and repent. He was baptized in the same water as prostitutes, tax collectors, and criminals. He was baptized in the same water that was used to bring people who were separated back to God because of their sinful ways. He was baptized like a sinner so he could serve as the saviour. The baptism that was given for the repentance of sin to Soldiers and farmers, husbands, and wives, young and old was received there that day from John the Baptist by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Even today we are baptized in the same way, to wash away the sins of our lifetime, to begin to repent from the ways of our sinful flesh and seek out Our God on our path to sanctification. The truth is we are no different than those people who sought out John's

baptism 2000 years ago. We are like the soldiers who came to John, we are not always content with what we have in life, we grumble and complain about our jobs and our pay. We are like the tax collectors who were always scheming to make a few more dollars so that they could enjoy their own pleasures. Many people will only work as hard as they need to, not putting in our best efforts or best quality work because we are self-seeking and self-serving, only doing what we need to so that we can enjoy the life we want. We too have probably been like the prostitutes with sexual sin, if not in physical ways, in ways of thought and words. Even good Christians have at times been like the Pharisees, filled with pride and arrogance and thinking ourselves better than those who were at the River Jordan seeking John's Baptism. We too are part of the people who are baptized in the river with all the other sinners.

When we are baptized, we are washing off all the sins of our life, the ones we have already committed, the ones we are committing and all the sins we will commit in the future. All of these sins are washed into the water, making clean water murky and dirty. That is the same water that every sinner throughout all of time is baptized in, washing away sins, making that water murkier and murkier.

Then Jesus steps into this murky water. He is the one who is pure and holy, he is perfectly clean, there is no washing off when Jesus steps into the water. Instead, it is his holiness that become stained with our sins. Jesus was baptized as a sinner so that he could become our saviour. His baptism marked the beginning of his public ministry, it becomes the beginning of his walk towards the cross.

Jesus came to this world as a baby, and from that point he was our savior and our substitute, and when he entered his thirties and walked to the River Jordan for his baptism, he was presenting himself as our sacrifice for our sins. It was his stepping into the River Jordan's murky waters and being baptized by John the Baptist that openly declared to all he was willingly following the Father's plan for the redemption of those who would follow Jesus, that he would willingly go to the cross and suffer for our sinful ways.

Which should help us understand what we see happening here:

Luke 3:21-22

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

When Jesus is baptized, we see the Holy Spirit descending upon him, confirming that although he was baptized along with the sinners, he was indeed their saviour.

When Jesus was baptized with the same murky water in which all of our sins were washed away, God declared that those who had their sins washed away would be seen as having their debt of sin taken off them and placed onto Jesus who would be the one to pay the price of all sin on the cross. Jesus would become the lamb that would be sacrificed for our debt of sin.

Think about that, mull it over in you minds this week, every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, and we say ' **And forgive us our debts,**' this is what we are speaking of, the debt of our sin paid for by Jesus our saviour. This is why people debate that word; should it be sins, trespasses, or debts. Sin makes it clear what we are speaking of, but does not let us know of the debt being paid, trespasses is unclear about both sin and debt owed and debt makes it easy for us to forget we are talking about the debt created by our own sinful actions.

Jesus stepped into the murky water that we had all been washed in. He did not do so to make himself clean, all of scripture tells us that Jesus was sinless, he did not need to be baptized. He stepped into the water so that he could be made dirty, so that he could take on the debt of our sins, he was made sin for us. Jesus stepped into the water and was baptized so that he could serve as our sacrifice and our saviour.

Knowing that Jesus serves as our savior because he was baptized alongside us in our sin, will help us to better understand what it is that John the Baptist says about the baptism that Jesus gives us through the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:16

¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire

All those who had approached John and been asking if he was the Messiah he told bluntly and directly that he was not the Messiah, and that the Messiah was coming. He also does not hesitate to speak of the fact that the Messiah will be providing a baptism to us different than his, the Messiah's baptism will be of '**Holy Spirit and fire.**' Speaking of both salvation and condemnation that is coming.

So, what is the difference between the baptism that John was providing and the one that Jesus would provide? Is John's baptism with water just symbolic?

When we look at scripture, we see that the baptism that John provided was indeed a baptism of repentance.

Acts 19:4

⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."

John's baptism was about declaring an acknowledgement of our sinful nature and repenting from it. It was indeed a significant baptism, one that was for the forgiveness of the debt from our sins. So why was it that John was saying that his baptism is just with water? John was fulfilling one call all of his life, his whole purpose of prophesy was to point to the coming Messiah, to point to Jesus. John is not trying to downplay the importance of a baptism by water, instead it is to emphasize the importance of the Baptism that comes with true faith in Jesus.

Just like that bathwater that was shared with an entire family, we all share in the baptismal water with Jesus and him with us. This is significant, while we are washed clean of our sins and Jesus is stained by ours, we are all sharing in the same water.

Galatians 3:26-27

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

We have been joined into the family of God, become his adopted children through our shared baptism with Christ. The baptism we have is more than a symbolic sprinkling of water or a dip under the surface. It is a shared experience with Jesus Christ, one that is meant to signify a lifelong commitment to the study and worship of God. This is why we have people who are baptized as babies go through confirmation, baptism is the symbolic representation of Jesus's shared baptism with us and that is a pretty significant choice in a person's life.

Jesus's baptism comes along with the Holy Spirit. The holy spirit is the one who equips us for service in Christ's name, it is the one that works with us in repenting from our sinful nature and sanctifying our lives, it is the one who gives us the strength to resist temptation and endure suffering and persecution. The gift of the Holy Spirit is significant! John's words about the baptism with the '**Holy Spirit and fire**' becomes a reality after the death and resurrection. On the day of Pentecost Peter tells the crowd of people gathered.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This makes the proclamation of John the Baptist truth. Jesus through his baptism with sinners opened the way to provide the Holy Spirit to all of those who believe in him through their own baptisms.

All sinners who have been baptized and believe in the truth of Christ have received the Holy Spirit. All sinners, all of them, who have been in the murky waters along with Christ

owe their salvation to Jesus and his willingness to become our sacrifice for our sins. All sinners who have join Jesus in the waters have the Holy Spirit in them, working in them, providing them with new life. They have been granted the fruits of the spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The Holy Spirit comes and lives in all who believe in Christ. However, John also spoke of the reality for those who do not come to Christ in their baptism. Jesus baptizes all with fire.

Fire burns, it destroys, in the Old Testament it was a symbol of purification and cleansing. Fire has been used to heal and cauterize wounds. Jesus's baptism comes alongside that purifying fire, it justifies us before God. Baptism through the Holy Spirit burns into our hearts, and as James teaches us, causes us to desire to stop our sinful nature. The fire burns away our old and sinful nature and then allows us to rise from the flames as a new person, living a new life for Christ.

John does not stop there; however, he also goes on to talk about Jesus's second coming.

Luke 3:17

¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

At the end of time, when Jesus returns to judge the world and to create the new Jerusalem, he will gather up his faithful. Jesus speaks of this himself in the book of Matthew when he tells the people the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. When he returns those who have been reborn through their baptism of Holy Spirit and Fire will be gathered up into the safety of Jesus's arms and granted an eternal life. Those who have not are the chaff, the tares, and they will be tossed into the eternal fires.

Jesus's baptism is a baptism that brings all sinners who accept him to reconciliation with God and eternal glory and life in his kingdom. Jesus's baptism made him our substitute into the unquenchable fire that sinners are destined to experience at the end of time. It was through his baptism in our sins that he opened the way for the living water of the Holy Spirit to enter us and begin the process of sanctifying us and purifying us.

John resisted Jesus when he came to be baptized. John knew and understood why all humans, all sinners needed a baptism of repentance, but he struggled with understanding why Jesus would need one. Jesus insisted that it needed to be done.

Matthew 3:15

¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.

Jesus was baptized to become our savior. He was baptized so that he could take on the penalties of our sins. He was baptized so that he could share the blessings of the Holy Spirit with each of us in this life and for all eternity. Let us all remember this as we walk into the world this week, Jesus was baptized to take on the debt of our sins and he did so willingly. God loved us so much he was willing to walk on this earth and suffer the pain, punishment, and humiliation of a crucifixion just so that we could spend eternity with him. All he asks of us in return is faith in him as our saviour. Can we walk with faith this week, sharing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us with all we meet and bring the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the world in our thoughts and deeds?

Let us pray,

Give Us Faith to Overcome Our Weakness

*Lord God, heavenly Father,
in your special love and mercy
you gave us your Son
who became truly human
and died on the cross for us.
Pour your Holy Spirit into our hearts
that we may put all our trust in him,
just as the Centurion believed
that Christ would help his sick servant,
may we be assured
of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.
We have your Word:
“Whoever believes in me will never see death.”
Dear Father in heaven,
grant that we may believe with no doubts in our hearts,
and remain in the faith until our last hour.
Almighty and eternal God,
mercifully look on our weaknesses,
and in all dangers and needs
defend us with your power against our enemies;
through Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one true God, now and forever. **Amen***

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Epiphany 3.

Hymn #170: “One Day” (V 1, 5)

One day when heaven was filled with His praises,
 One day when sin was as black as could be,
 Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin,
 Dwelt among men, my example is He!

Refrain

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
 Buried, He carried my sins far away;
 Rising, He justified freely, forever;
 One day He's coming: O glorious day!

One day the trumpet will sound for His coming,
 One day the skies with His glory will shine;
 Wonderful day, my beloved ones bringing;
 Glorious Savior, this Jesus is mine! [Refrain]

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

*Bright Morning Star,
 your light has come,
 and your birth, O Jesus,
 has overwhelmed us with joy.
 Like the Magi of long ago,*

*may we be drawn to you
and offer you such gifts as we are able. Amen.*

Closing Hymn #211: "O The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus" (V 1, 3)

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
rolling as a mighty ocean
in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
is the current of thy love;
leading onward, leading homeward,
to my glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Love of ev'ry love the best:
'tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'tis a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;
and it lifts me up to glory,
for it lifts me up to thee.

Pastoral Prayer

*God of time and eternity:
As this new year stretches before us,
we thank you for the time you give us
and for all those things that are still possible and precious in this gift.
We thank you for each new day and its possibilities;
for each night, its rest and reflection.
We thank you for words of forgiveness and the chance to make a new start,
for word of invitation to explore new opportunities.
Give us the courage to try something new
and the conviction to finish things leftover from last year.
Make time spent this year your time, O God.
Bless our time with you.*

*God of moments and memories
we remember before you people facing hard times in the months ahead.
We pray for those struggling with illness,
and for those facing treatment or surgery with uncertain results....
We pray for those who are grieving the loss of dear ones
and for all who remember what used to be but can no longer be...*

*Make time spent this year your time, O God.
Bless our time with you.*

*God of hopefulness and helpfulness,
we remember those who are seeking new opportunities this year:
Those training for new employments and those looking for work;
Those developing new businesses and seeking the right employees;
And those who provide services to improve life in our communities
amid the uncertainties around us...
Give us wisdom and perseverance in the works we undertake as a congregation
in the face of all the changes in our community.
Make time spent this year your time, O God.
Bless our time with you.*

*As we work together with the vision of your kingdom before us this year,
fill us with love and generosity that can change the world because of your blessing.
We pray we can make a difference in even the most challenging situations
because we are the people of your beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we
pray. **Amen***

Benediction

*May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts, transform our lives,
and brighten the world.
And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
rest upon you always. **Amen.***